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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on teaching varieties of French spoken outside of France, examining how best to introduce American students to French spoken in many francophone communities. Highlighting the notions of functional competence and pedagogical norm as central criteria for developing effective, but realistic, curricula for introducing Quebec French into French language programs, the paper asserts that different situations call for different solutions. Specifically, it shows that while it is feasible, and probably desirable, to make French immersion students in Quebec not only capable of understanding different registers of Quebec French, but also of using them, such an objective is unrealistic and unnecessary in the context of U.S. foreign language classrooms. The paper follows up on Auger & Valdman's (1999) suggestion that U.S. students should be acquainted with Quebec French early on, but only for receptive purposes, proposing the use of popular songs by Quebec artists. It suggests that a carefully selected set of songs, presented in a sequence that considers students' French proficiency, can familiarize students with typical "quebecismes," teach them about the cultural and sociopolitical context in Quebec, and counter the mistaken impression of some students and teachers that Quebec French is a corrupt form of French better kept out of the classroom. (Contains 23 references.) (SM)

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Linguistic Norm vs. Functional Competence: Introducing Québec French to American Students

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Introduction

The teaching of second and foreign languages has changed dramatically during the past forty years. Decontextualized drill exercises have been replaced or supplemented by activities that focus on authentic situations of communication. While language curricula used to be articulated around the notion of a single correct standard or, maybe more accurately, a lack of awareness of the variation that characterizes human languages, many now explicitly acknowledge that multiple norms exist and that students should be equipped to use their target language in a variety of different settings. Thus, in addition to teaching students the forms of standard Spanish or standard French, for example, many pedagogues expand the linguistic horizons of their students by introducing them to a larger variety of social, geographical, and stylistic options than was the case previously. Both of these changes pursue the same goal: making students able to use the knowledge acquired in class, that is, to express themselves, make themselves understood by native speakers of the language, and understand what is said around them and to them.

While this new approach to linguistic variation is welcomed by many teachers and linguists who applaud the less prescriptive and more open attitude that it brings to the classroom, we must admit that it also raises new problems. Joseph (1988, p. 33) thus summarizes what he terms a crisis: "a foreign-language pedagogy moving steadily in the direction of oral proficiency and cultural openness encounters a spoken language which is the butt of cultural prejudice, perhaps even more among American teachers of French than among the

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general educated French population." In his paper, Joseph considers only one type of variation, the distance that separates written and spoken French,[1] and he evaluates six different solutions to this problem. He expresses a personal preference for an approach which first introduces students of French to the oral structures of what he calls "New French" and then familiarize them with the written forms of Modern French, but he conceives that other teachers might prefer to start with written Modern French and then introduce oral New French.

The present paper examines another type of variation that is finding a niche in French curricula: varieties of French spoken outside of France. While I take for granted that it is a good idea to introduce American students of French to varieties of French spoken in Switzerland, Belgium, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Louisiana, Québec, and other francophone communities, in this paper, I seek to determine how this can best be done. Focusing on the notions of functional competence and pedagogical norm as central criteria for developing effective but realistic curricula for introducing Québec French into French-language programs, I argue that different situations call for different solutions. Specifically, I show that while it is feasible, and probably desirable, to make French-immersion students in Québec not only capable of understanding different registers of Québec French, but also of using them, at least to some extent, such an objective is unrealistic and unnecessary in the context of foreign language classrooms in the United States. Instead, I will follow up on Auger & Valdman's (1999) suggestion that American students should be acquainted with Québec French early on, but for receptive purposes only, and I will propose that we use popular songs by Québec artists. As we will see, a carefully selected set of songs, presented in a sequence that takes into account their level of proficiency in French, can serve to familiarize students with typical *québécismes*, teach them about the cultural and sociopolitical context in Québec, and counter the mistaken impression that some students, and maybe also some teachers, have that Québec French is a corrupt form of French that is better kept out of any classroom.

Language Teaching and Functional Competence in French-Immersion Classes in Canada

For most students who study foreign language in a classroom setting, functional competence, that is, the ability to use their target language in various settings and to communicate successfully with diverse interlocutors, remains a very elusive goal. Limited time spent studying the language, the lack of opportunities to hear and speak the target

language, and the artificial setting of the classroom all contribute to making it very difficult to develop a real ability to speak the language and understand it. While it is unfortunate but not surprising that functional competence should be difficult to achieve for American learners of French, in this section we will see that this problem is not unique to foreign language settings. Specifically, we will examine evidence that even French-immersion programs in Québec do not always succeed in making their graduates capable of effectively communicating in French with francophones from their own community.

Canada is officially a bilingual country, but this does not mean that all Canadians are bilingual. Rather, bilingualism in Canada can be described as institutional, since it only requires federal employees who work in offices where bilingual services must be provided, and not private citizens, to be bilingual. Indeed, in spite of the fact that most, if not all, school systems across Canada offer courses in French and/or English as a second language, only Québec and New Brunswick require that their high-school students study the other official language;[2] consequently, most Canadians speak only one of the two official languages. According to a 1999 publication of the Ministry of Canadian Heritage titled *Official Languages: Myths and Realities*, 14.3% of the population of Canada speaks only French, 67.1% speaks only English, while 17% speaks both French and English. Most bilinguals in Canada are concentrated in three provinces: New Brunswick, Ontario, and Québec, with the largest number found in Québec (2,412,985 vs. 1,234,895 in Ontario and 237,765 in New Brunswick, according to 1991 census figures reported by the Ministry of Canadian Heritage).

While the percentage of Canadian bilinguals may seem rather small for a so-called bilingual country, it should be noted that the number of bilinguals greatly increased in the forty years from 1951 to 1991, as it went from 1.7 to 4.4 million, far exceeding the general growth in population that took place during the same period. A significant part of this increase is due to the fact that many English speakers, both in Québec and in the rest of Canada, realized that it was in their children's best interest to learn French. Indeed, important social changes in Québec in the 1960s and subsequent changes in the language policies of Canada, Québec, and New Brunswick have made it increasingly important for monolingual English speakers to become proficient speakers of French in order to succeed economically. In the 1960s, a group of parents pressured their local school board in the suburbs of Montréal to implement an experimental program for the teaching of French as a second language in their school, hoping that this program would be more efficient than the programs that were

currently in place and would help their children become proficient in French. This experimental program, called French immersion, was so successful that it has been adapted and adopted by other schools in the Montréal area as well in every Canadian province and territory. In 1999–2000, 2,127 schools in Canada offered French-immersion programs, and 320,495 students were enrolled in them, according to the statistics published in Canadian Heritage's 2000–2001 *Official Languages* report.

While the new language policy of Québec makes it obligatory for every child who is educated in English to study French as a second language, many parents remain convinced that the minimal level of French that is required is not sufficient for their children and choose to enroll them in French-immersion programs. The *Official Languages* report estimates that 40,212 students were enrolled in French-immersion programs in Québec in 2000–2001, or 39.3% of those studying French as a second language. In conjunction with the general social changes that have taken place in Québec since the 1960s, the popularity of immersion programs has had a very strong impact on the anglophone and allophone[3] populations of this province. According to the "Living in French in Quebec" section of the official web site of the Ministry of Canadian Heritage, "[t]he percentage of anglophones able to hold a conversation in French increased from 37% to 59% between 1971 and 1991. With respect to allophones, the percentage went from 47% to 69%."

French-immersion programs have not only greatly contributed to increasing the number of bilingual anglophones in Québec, they have also helped them become more proficient speakers of French. Indeed, many studies have shown that the proficiency of anglophones who have learned French through immersion far exceeds that of anglophones who have studied French in traditional core programs (Genesee 1998) and that it sometimes matches that of native speakers. Specifically, immersion students generally score as high as comparable native speakers in both written and oral comprehension tasks, but somewhat lower than them in both written and oral production tasks (Genesee 1987, 1998).

In view of the successes described above, it is surprising to realize that even students who have graduated from immersion programs sometimes have difficulty functioning in French in Montréal. Specifically, while I was teaching at McGill University in the mid-1990s, a number of students shared with me the frustration which they felt at trying to use, in real-life settings, the language that they had spent so many years learning in school. Quite interestingly, their problem was not limited to production but also involved comprehension, as they

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reported often having difficulty understanding what coworkers would say to them. Thus, it seems that the first goal of immersion programs, which is "to provide the participating students with functional competence in both written and spoken aspects of French" (Genesee 1987, p. 12), had not been fully met for these students. This problem has been noted by other researchers, including Genesee (1978, 1981), Thibault & Sankoff (1993), and Tarone & Swain (1995), but few concrete solutions have been proposed to solve it.

The comprehension problem described in the previous paragraph comes as a surprise for two reasons. First, it is unexpected in view of the reported findings that receptive skills exceed production skills among immersion students. Second, in the Montréal context, where French is so widely accessible on the street, at work, and in the media, it is difficult to imagine that anglophones studying French have not received extensive input in their target language. The solution to the first puzzle, concerning the discrepancy between the evaluations of educators and linguists, on the one hand, and those of the students and graduates themselves, on the other, is actually quite simple: the kind of French that is evaluated by educators and linguists is not the same one that is commented on by students. As Genesee (1987, p. 46) stresses, the language skills that are tested in school settings all deal with school French rather than street French. Whereas the difference between school English and street English may be, for many speakers, relatively small, it is well known that the distance between the two forms of French is rather large. Some might even argue that it is larger in Montréal than in other French-speaking cities. Indeed, the two varieties of French differ in many respects, and it is easy to imagine that some of these differences may impede communication, including comprehension, on the part of second language learners who have not had a chance to learn them, just as they sometimes pose problems to French speakers from other francophone countries.[4]

Pitois (1997) and Auger (2002) examine textbooks and materials used in French-immersion programs in Québec and their studies confirm that while these materials contain words and expressions that are characteristic of standard Québec French, they do not introduce students to the colloquial forms of French that French-speaking Montréalers are likely to use in real-life settings. Obviously, there is nothing unusual about this situation, as schools are expected to teach standard languages and to correct colloquial forms of speech that have been acquired at recess and outside of school. Why should French-immersion programs be any different? Parents who enroll their children in French-immersion courses expect their children to learn "good" French in school. For instance, Thibault & Sankoff (1993, p. 214), who

have been involved in a detailed research project concerning bilingual anglophones from Montréal, quote a passage from one of their interviews about parents who withdrew their daughter from a French-speaking school and transferred her into a French immersion program because they did not like the fact that she was learning to speak *joual*, or street French, at the French-speaking school. In addition, in the context of French-immersion programs in Montréal, students have, in principle, many opportunities to be exposed to colloquial forms of Québec French (TV sitcoms, movies, friends, and coworkers) and thus should not need to learn it in school.

The comprehension problem reported by immersion graduates is a consequence of the fact that most immersion students rarely use French outside of school, as most of their friends are anglophones and their activities take place in English. Furthermore, anglophones appear not to seek opportunities to speak French, and their use of French tends to be "reactive," that is, in response to francophones addressing them in French, rather than active (cf. Genesee 1987). Thus, while immersion programs do not teach colloquial French to their students, because they assume that the students will acquire it on their own outside of the classroom, students are not taking advantage of their surroundings to complement what they learn in school.

We must wonder why immersion students make such little effort to use French outside of school. One possibility is that immersion students feel hesitant to seek out French-speaking friends due to the fact that their knowledge of French does not equip them for conversing in French with friends their own age and talking about topics that are unrelated to school. This idea, which is inspired by similar hypotheses developed in Tarone & Swain (1995), might help us understand a very puzzling paradox that is reported by these authors: namely the fact that children and adolescents use less and less French as they get older, in spite of the fact that their L2 competence is improving. Tarone & Swain (1995) attribute this situation to the fact that the immersion context only provides students with a formal variety of French that is appropriate for formal functions such as addressing one's teachers or parents. Furthermore, they point out that during preadolescent and teenage years, questions of identity take a very central place in the lives of students, and "preadolescents and adolescents need a vernacular style as a way of signaling their identities" (Tarone & Swain 1995, p. 168). In this context, we can expect that if students had access to a wider stylistic range in French and more opportunities to practice using the language in varied settings, they might become more active in their use of French and would stand a better chance of becoming truly bilingual.

But how do we expand the stylistic horizons of students learning French in immersion programs? Auger (2002) takes up a suggestion made by Ossipov (1994) and proposes that class time be devoted to works by Québécois authors that feature characters who speak colloquial Québec French. Specifically, Auger (2002) shows how the novel *La grosse femme d'à côté est enceinte* 'The fat woman next door is pregnant' by Michel Tremblay may serve to familiarize students with the pronunciation, the lexicon, the morphology, and the syntax of working-class French in Montréal. The short excerpt below, which corresponds to roughly the first page of the novel, illustrates the typical use of standard and colloquial French in this and in other novels that Michel Tremblay wrote around the same period. While the narrative sections are generally written in standard Québec French, with colloquial words being used only occasionally, the dialogues tend to mirror the speech of the working-class speakers that the characters depict. In this excerpt, we note many features of colloquial French that are not specific to Québec French: elisions as in *d'la*, *j'pense*, *t'as*, and *j'me rappelle*, and the absence of the subject pronoun in *faut pas exagérer.* We also find many features that are typical of colloquial Québec French. For instance, we note the use of the anglicism *loose*, spelled *lousse*. Non-standard pronunciations such as *moman* for *maman* and *j'arais* for *j'aurais* should also be noted. With respect to morphology, we note the regularization of the verb *s'asseoir*, which is generally conjugated as *finir* 'to finish' in Québec French: *s'assir.* Finally, lexical usages and expressions typical of Québec French are illustrated in this short passage. Thus, the verb *jongler* is used here to mean something like 'to juggle ideas in one's head', and the phrase *de même* means 'so, this way'. As we can see, this short passage contains no less than fifteen non-standard features of French, many of which are specific to Québec French.

> *Rose, Violette et Mauve tricotaient. Parfois Rose (ou Violette, ou Mauve) posait son tricot sur ses genoux, jetait un coup d'oeil mi-amusé mi-sévère sur le travail de ses soeurs et disait: "Tu tricotes trop lousse." ou bien: "Si moman m'avait donné d'la laine de c'te couleur-là, j'arais été ben désappointée!" ou bien encore elle ne disait rien. Si elle restait inactive trop longtemps, l'une de ses soeurs tournait la tête vers elle: "Finis ta patte avant de jongler." Et Rose (ou Violette, ou Mauve) reprenait son travail après un discret soupir. Le silence s'installait. Confortablement. Mais au bout de quelques minutes: "C'est rare qu'on peut s'assir dehors un 2 mai, hein?" "Ouan... J'pense que c'est la première fois." "Voyons donc, faut pas exagérer! Depuis le temps..." "C'est vrai, t'as raison... j'me rappelle, l'année que Victoire a eu Gabriel..." "C'tait pas l'année de Gabriel, c'tait l'année d'Édouard,*

son deuxième..." "Comme tu veux." "C'est pas comme j'veux, c'est de même. C'était l'année d'Édouard."

'Rose, Violette, and Mauve were knitting. Sometimes Rose (or Violette, or Mauve) would put down her knitting on her lap, would glance, half amused, half severe at her sisters' work and say "You knit too loosely." or "If mom had given wool that color, I would have been very disappointed!" or else she would say nothing. If she remained inactive too long, one of her sisters would turn her head toward her: "Finish your leg before daydreaming." And Rose (or Violette, or Mauve) would resume her work with a discrete sigh. Silence would settle. Comfortably. But after a few minutes: "It's rare we can sit outside on May 2, right?" "Yeah . . . I think it's the first time." "Come on, don't exaggerate! For as long as . . ." "It's true, you're right . . . I remember, the year that Victoire gave birth to Gabriel . . ." "It wasn't the year of Gabriel, it was the year of Édouard, her second . . ." "As you wish." "It's not as I wish, that's the way it is. It was the year of Édouard."

However, as Auger (2002) notes, in the context of French-immersion in Québec, reading passages in colloquial Québec French and hearing them in plays, TV shows, and movies may still not suffice in order to prepare students to seek out opportunities to speak French in real-life settings. As a complement to the literary approach explained above, she proposes, following the lead of Lyster (1993, 1994), the use of different activities that place students in situations that mirror non-academic settings. For instance, role play activities in which students act as DJs for rock radio shows, as suggested in Tarone & Swain (1995, p. 175). In a similar vein, students could enact a first meeting between an immersion student and a new francophone college roommate (Sax 1999) giving them an opportunity to practice some of the colloquial features to which they have been exposed in Michel Tremblay's books and in movies and television shows viewed in school. Such activities need not take up much class time, but they may make an important difference in the linguistic choices that students make outside of the classroom. Once they feel well equipped for functioning in French in real-life every-day situations, one can hope that they will feel more comfortable seeking out such settings and that they will finally develop a full functional competence in French.

Introducing Québec French in Foreign Language Curricula

Full functional competence is a reasonable and feasible goal in the context of French immersion in the Montréal area. It is obviously not so in the context of foreign language instruction in the United States.

Does this mean that we should abandon any such efforts and expose our students only to standard European French, or referential French? While this practice was long the norm in language pedagogy, many current textbooks now accord a significant place to *la francophonie* and its different cultures and ways of speaking French. A good example of this trend is the second edition of *Chez nous*, a first-year textbook that was published in 2001 and that is subtitled *Branché sur le monde francophone*. This textbook truly lives up to its promise. It features in its dialogues and exercises French speakers from such diverse francophone communities as Louisiana, Belgium, Switzerland, Québec, Mali, Guadeloupe, Senegal, and Polynesia, and it devotes significant sections to describing the sociolinguistic situations in Louisiana, Québec and Canada, and the overseas departments and territories. What I would like to propose in the rest of this paper is that we should complement the precious information contained in textbooks such as *Chez nous* and expose students to authentic written and oral materials from the different francophone communities. While my proposal focuses specifically on Québec French, the principles that inspire it should be applicable to other varieties of French, especially those that are widely used as both vernacular and vehicular in their speech communities.

Introducing students to authentic samples of Québec French is important for at least three major reasons. First, it reinforces for students the sense that the French language is not a monolithic entity but rather a flexible tool of communication that comes in different accents and uses different words in its different homes. Second, it better prepares them to interact with any francophone whom they might encounter either in their travels abroad or in their home country. Third, it provides students with a more complete understanding of the sociolinguistic situation of another francophone community, one which is closer geographically and yet less well known.

The approach proposed here for increasing the presence of Québec French in curricula of French as a foreign language used in the United States focuses on two central notions: the notion of pedagogical norm that was proposed by Valdman (1976) and is further discussed in many other papers, including the one published in this volume, and the conviction that our language classes should introduce students to the various guises in which Québec French is attested (Auger & Valdman 1999). Just as French is not a monolithic entity, neither is Québec French.

The pedagogical norm, which was proposed to help language teachers determine which linguistic forms should be taught, which should not, and the order in which they should be taught, takes into

account the variation that characterizes the target language, the social values that are attached to different linguistic forms, and the learning process that the students are engaged in. While this approach stresses that students should be familiar with the different forms and accents that characterize the target language as it is used by native speakers, it recognizes that all linguistic forms are not socially equal and recommends that students should learn to use socially acceptable forms of speech. Specifically, while non-standard forms of speech may serve, in some cases, as stepping stones for acquiring more prestigious forms (Valdman, this volume), non-standard forms ought to be taught primarily for recognition rather than production purposes. In other words, the ultimate goal is to train Americans and other learners of French to speak French like educated, middle-class speakers from Paris and surrounding areas. However, at the same time, learners must be made aware that not everyone speaks so-called standard or Referential French, so that they are not predjudiced against these native speakers.

The advent of sociolinguistics in the 1960s has revolutionized the way linguists look at language and the variation that we inevitably uncover whenever we examine it in any detail. Before the 1960s, the fact that speakers alternate between equivalent ways of saying the same thing, such as *swimming* and *swimmin'* or *going to* vs. *gonna*, was typically taken to mean that language use is messy and that we should base our linguistic analyses on an idealized knowledge of language. Labov (1966, 1972) and many others after him have shown that linguistic variation is very systematic and that it is also an integral part of language and of speech communities. Specifically, sociolinguists have established that all speakers adapt the way they speak to the communicative setting. For instance, speakers automatically adjust their use of prestigious and non-prestigious forms of speech to the level of formality of the situation. In addition, sociolinguists have shown that variation patterns within the speech of individual speakers mirror what can be observed at the level of the speech community, where speakers from higher socio-economic groups use more prestigious forms of speech than speakers from lower socioeconomic classes. No speaker and no speech community have been found to be exempt from this type of variation. Viewed in this light, we expect to find in Québec French the same type of variation that has been found to characterize every human language: while some speakers have a strong Québécois accent and use many words that are unique to them and may be difficult to understand for speakers who are not familiar with this variety of French, others speak what we can call "standard Québec French"; furthermore, all speakers have the ability to adjust

their speech and speak more formally when they are addressing foreigners or a public audience than when they are simply relaxing with close friends. Therefore, in order to have an accurate picture of Québec French and to avoid the negative stereotypes that students, and some of their teachers, entertain toward the less prestigious forms of French that are used in Québec (Salien 1998), it is crucial that students be aware of the range of registers and accents that are found in Québec French.

In view of the pedagogical norm, and given that American students of French find themselves in a situation that greatly differs from that of French-immersion students in Québec, for whom a complete functional competence in French which includes a Québec accent and a productive knowledge of colloquial forms of speech is an achievable, and sometimes desirable, goal, I reiterate Auger & Valdman's (1999) position that the goal in introducing Québec French to American learners of French is to promote recognition and understanding of this variety but not to encourage students to sound like the Québécois.[5] Thus, we should present students with written and audio materials which will make them familiar with this variety of French and will illustrate for them the different forms that French can take in Québec but not ask them to imitate the forms presented to them.

Thanks to the Internet and to international electronic shopping, it is now easier than ever to have access to a great variety of texts, audio, and video documents for the teaching of Québec French. For instance, Dickinson (1999) provides French teachers who want to introduce their students to Québec French with many very useful references and URLs. Indeed, it is now possible for francophones and francophiles around the world to read a summary of the news or to hear the hourly news on www.radio-canada.ca. One can even listen to live radio using free software such as RealPlayer or WindowsMedia. One can also take advantage of magazine (e.g., *L'Actualité* and *Châtelaine*) or newspaper (e.g., *Le Soleil, La Presse, Le Devoir, Voir*) articles that are accessible free of charge to expose their students to written Québec French. Finally, online shopping makes it easy to order novels, essays, and magazines, as well as videos, DVDs, and CDs, directly from bookstores and music stores in Québec. While any of these materials would undoubtedly help students know and understand Québec French much better, I would like to propose an approach that relies on popular songs from Québec for teaching Québec French.

The idea of using popular music in language teaching, while certainly neither novel nor unique, was proven to me by my own experience learning English through the lyrics of popular songs from the 1970s. As I read and memorized the lyrics of many songs by the

Beatles, Genesis, Supertramp, Pink Floyd, and many others groups, I not only greatly extended my English vocabulary but also became familiar with many nonstandard words and constructions that were not taught in my English courses. Thus, I remember being surprised when I discovered that some speakers use *don't* with third person singular subjects (e.g., *but she don't care* and *My baby don't care* in the Beatles' song *Ticket to Ride)* and that *ain't* is often used to negate verbs (e.g., *But I ain't seen nothing like him in any amusement hall* in Elton John's *Pinball Wizard*). The pedagogical use of popular songs presents a number of advantages for second- or foreign-language teaching to high-school and college students. First, it is well known that many teenagers and young adults have a strong interest in popular music. Thus, we can use songs to teach language in a less dry and more engaging way. Second, songs constitute self-contained texts that last only a few minutes. Third, many songs are written using language that mirrors to various degrees the spoken language of the young audience that they target. As a consequence, it is easy to see how a given song can be treated as a whole unit in one or two class periods, and how different songs can be presented at different times to illustrate the diversity that characterizes the speech of different segments of the population.

In a sense, the most difficult part of this paper consists in selecting a few representative songs by Québec artists that will introduce the students to the Québécois language and culture. Indeed, the music industry in Québec has come a long way since Félix Leclerc had to exile himself to Paris in the early 1950s in order to be "discovered" by the French before his talent was recognized by his fellow Québécois. The second half of the 20th century was a period of far-reaching social and political changes in Québec during which the Québécois developed a strong Québécois identity that replaced their French Canadian identity. This "Quiet Revolution" set the stage for a cultural revolution in many areas, including the music scene. Gilles Vigneault, Jean-Pierre Ferland, Claude Léveillée, and Robert Lévesque followed in Leclerc's footsteps. Robert Charlebois revolutionized Québec music when he introduced rock rhythms and started writing songs in Montréal working-class French–or *joual*. The 1970s followed with an explosion of different genres and many new bands and singers. A strong Québécois song tradition is now solidly established, as the number and popularity of Québécois artists continue to grow throughout the francophone world.

With so many songs available, it is easy to imagine that different instructors would select different songs to best serve their purposes. In a course that focuses on francophone culture, we would probably select songs that have had a particularly strong impact in the recent history of Québec, as well as a few songs that describe in some detail

specific aspects of the life style of the Québécois. In a literature or poetry course, the quality and the variety of the lyrics would certainly constitute primary criteria. In a language course, we must obviously pay close attention to the level of difficulty of the lyrics in order to avoid introducing a song prematurely. In addition, I suggest that it would be wise to select songs which target a young audience in Québec and which are likely to appeal to a young audience in the United States. However, music should obviously not be the only criterion. Good lyrics that illustrate different registers of Québec French and different aspects of its linguistic structure are also central to the goal pursued in this paper.

The idea of using songs from Québec to familiarize students of French to the language and culture of Québec has already produced *Des chansons québécoises sans frontières* 'Québec songs without borders', published by Angéline Martel in 1992.[6] This innovative instrument provides teachers of French with a collection of twelve songs accompanied by series of activities that can be used to complement general textbooks and teaching methods. However, in spite of its many great qualities, I would argue that this instrument is not particularly well adapted to the teaching of French in the United States in the early 21st century. First, while Martel's selection centers around classic songs by many of the pillars of the music scene in Québec in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, including Beau Dommage, Robert Charlebois, Georges Dor, Jean-Pierre Ferland, Félix Leclerc, Claude Léveillée, Raymond Lévesque, Luc Plamondon, and Gilles Vigneault, and certainly suits the tastes of adult learners and instructors very well, it is not clear to me that these songs would appeal to high-school and college-age students and would motivate them to make the kind of effort I made to learn English from learning the lyrics of popular songs. Second, I think that the decision to have the songs specially recorded by a singer who is also a teacher of French as a second language in order to facilitate comprehension on the part of the students also negatively impacts the positive effect that we seek to obtain in using authentic songs: for one thing, the whole song itself is no longer authentic, as it is not presented in its original version; for another, the kind of musical arrangement that could be achieved is too simple and not very appealing, once again, to young learners of French. While I agree with many of the goals set forth in Martel's collection and would never dare call into question the quality of the songs that are included in her work, I feel that it is necessary to propose a more modern selection of songs that largely focuses on the tastes of our target audience.

Following the lead of such recent textbooks as *Chez nous* and the opinion expressed in Auger & Valdman (1999) that it is advisable to

introduce students early to the "diverse voices of Francophony," I propose that we introduce some Québec songs during the first year of French. In order to ensure that the exercise is beneficial for beginning students, we must choose a text that contains some lexical *québécismes* but that is pronounced in a light Québécois accent. Otherwise, there is a very real danger that the song will be too difficult for the students and that they will not even try to understand its language and its particularities. My proposal consists of two different tracks, so to speak. The first "track" proposes a unique song to instructors who do not wish to or do not have the time to play more songs from Québec. The second "track" proposes a series of songs that are arranged in order of difficulty and that can be introduced at different stages during the course of one semester or at different levels of proficiency in a course sequence.

The song that I propose for the first track is *Les maudits Français* 'The damned French'[7] by Lynda Lemay. Because it is fairly easy to understand, this song can be introduced in French classes as soon as the students are competent enough to be exposed to authentic French speech. However, because this is authentic French, it is also appropriate for any more advanced level of French. If only one song can be played to the students, this one stands out due to its content: it constitutes an excellent introduction to many aspects of French and Québécois culture. With much humor, Lemay points out different practices in the two French-speaking communities and pokes fun at both ways of life. A few illustrative excerpts from the song are presented below.

Les maudits Français 'The damned French'
(lyrics and music: Lynda Lemay)

[. . .]

Y font des manifs aux quarts d'heure	'They're staging protests every fifteen minutes
À tous les mautadits coins d'rue	On every darn street corner
Tous les taxis ont des chauffeurs	All the cabs have drivers
Qui roulent en fous, qui collent au cul	Who drive like maniacs, who ride your bumper

[. . .]

Y disent qu'y dînent quand y soupent	'They say that they have lunch when they have dinner
Et y est deux heures quand y déjeunent	And it's 2 o'clock when they have breakfast
Au petit matin, ça sent l'yaourt	In early morning, it smells like yogurt

Y connaissent pas les oeufs-bacon	They don't know eggs and bacon'
[. . .]	
Pis y nous prennent pour un martien	'And they look at us as if we were from Mars
Quand on commande un verre de lait	When we order a glass of milk
Ou quand on demande: "La salle de bain	Or when we ask "The bathroom
Est à quelle place, S.V.P.?"	Is where, please?"
Et quand ils arrivent chez nous	And when they arrive in our country
Y s'prennent une tuque et un Kanuk	They take a woolen hat and a winter coat
Se mettent à chercher des igloos	Start looking for igloos
Finissent dans une cabane à sucre	End up in a sugar shack
Y tombent en amour sur le coup	They fall in love right away
Avec nos forêts et nos lacs	With our forests and our lakes
Et y s'mettent à parler comme nous	And they start speaking like us
Apprenent à dire "TABARNAK"	Learn to say "tabernacle"
Et bien saoulés au caribou	And drunk from drinking "caribou"
À la Molson et au gros gin	Molson beer and gin
Y s'extasient sur nos ragoûts	They go on and on about our stews
D'pattes de cochon et nos plats d'binne	Of pig's legs and our bean dishes'
[. . .]	
Quand leur séjour tire à sa fin	'When their stay is almost over
Ils ont compris qu'ils ont plus l'droit	They have learned that they have no right
De nous appeler les Canadiens	To call us the Canadians
Alors que l'on est québécois	When we are Québécois'

Lynda Lemay sings this song with a recognizable Québec accent, but one that is fairly mild. Many of her vowels are clearly identifiable as Québécois, and she affricates the consonants /t/ and /d/ in words like *tire* 'draws' and *dînent* 'have lunch', but she does not use any of the more extreme features that characterize working class French in Québec. She also introduces her audience to many words that are specific to Québec: the use of *déjeuner, dîner*, and *souper* to refer to the three main meals of the day, les *oeufs-bacon* that we sometimes eat for breakfast in Québec,[8]

other regional specialties such as the *ragoût de pattes de cochon*, our baked white beans, *les binnes*, and *caribou*, a liquor made of red wine and white whiskey, as well as the famous *cabane à sucre*. In the first verse, where Lemay describes the habit that the French have of staging protests all the time and the aggressiveness of Parisian cab drivers, she uses *mautadit*, a mild version of the *maudit* adjective used in the title, to express exasperation at the fact that there are so many demonstrations in Paris. She also mentions one of the many religious words that are used for cursing in Québec, *tabarnak*, and she introduces an expression calqued on English, *tomber en amour*. The only non-standard features of her grammar are the dropping of /l/ in the subject pronoun *il* 'he' (which is spelled *y* in the song) and the dropping of negative *ne*, but these features are commonly found in colloquial varieties of French in France and in other francophone communities. Finally, the end of the song, in which Lemay explains to the French who have not yet been to Québec (and to our American students) that French speakers from Québec are *Québécois* rather than *Canadien*, constitutes an excellent introduction to the question of the identity of the Québécois and their recent nationalist movement.

The second track provides French instructors with a sequence of songs that gradually introduce students to the different registers of Québec French. Because of its interesting comparison between French and Québécois cultures, Lemay's song should also occupy a privileged position in this second track. In such a sequence, Québec French, this song could be introduced at any moment or could also replace another song.

To open the sequence of the second track, I propose two songs that exemplify standard Québec French: a very light accent, standard grammar, and words that may be unique to Québec French but are accepted as standard by virtually all Québécois. The first of these two songs, the classic *Mon pays* 'My country' by Gilles Vigneault, was selected because of its focus on one central and inescapable aspect of life in Québec: winter. The first two verses of this song are given below. The only word in the excerpt below which is likely not to be familiar to students of French is the word *poudrerie*, a *québécisme* which means 'blowing snow'.

Mon pays 'My country'
(lyrics and music: Gilles Vigneault)

Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays c'est l'hiver	'My country is not a country it's winter'
Mon jardin ce n'est pas un jardin c'est la plaine	'My garden is not a garden it's the plain'
Mon chemin ce n'est pas un chemin c'est la neige	'My road is not a road it's snow'

Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays c'est l'hiver	'My country is not a country it's winter'
Dans la au vent cérémonie	'In the white ceremony
Où la neige au vent se marie	Where snow gets married to the wind
Dans ce pays de poudrerie	In this country of blowing snow
Mon père a fait bâtir maison	My father had a house built
Et je m'en vais être fidèle	And I'm going to be faithful
À sa manière, à son modèle	To his manner, to his model
La chambre d'amis sera telle	The guest room will be such
Qu'on viendra des autres saisons	That one will come from the other seasons
Pour se bâtir à côté d'elle [. . .]	To build a house next to it'

While *Mon pays* occupies such a central place in the recent history of music in Québec that it was difficult for me to imagine leaving it out of this song sequence, I can understand how some instructors might be hesitant to start their song sequence with a song that is so different from the music that most of their students are familiar with. As a matter of fact, it might be argued that the choice of the first song is particularly important in order to grab our students' attention and interest. As an alternative to the Vigneault classic, I thus propose a song entitled *Juré* 'Promised' by Jorane, a young woman who plays the cello and sings. As the following excerpt shows, this song contains no features that would pose problems for beginning learners of French.

Juré 'Promised'
(lyrics and music: Johanne Pelletier, aka as Jorane)

J'ai juré discipline et bonté	'I have promised discipline and goodness
Mais voilà... / J'ai juré de rester	But here it is . . . / I have promised to stay
sage, plutôt froide	wise, rather cold
De ne plus parler / Mais...	To no longer speak / But . . .
Mais voilà que chavirent vers l'au-delà	But now tip over toward the beyond
Mes plus pures pensées	My purest thoughts
Voilà que je lève vers l'au-delà	Now I raise toward the beyond
Un regard glacé // J'ai changé de peu	A frozen look // I have changed a little
tel un serpent J'en ai plein le dos de voir	like a snake. I've had enough seeing
Des gens se trahir en se serrant la main	People betray each other while shaking hands

Pourtant je désire / Rester ici	Yet I desire / To stay here
Un soir de plus / C'est bien la première fois	One more evening / It's really the first time
Que je veux rester à un endroit [...]	That I want to stay somewhere

At the next level, we can introduce a song which contains clear features of Québec French. One good choice is a song entitled *Irresponsable*, which is interpreted by a new group called Okoumé. The accent is more clearly Québécois than in the two previous songs, and the vocabulary is a mixture of referential French and colloquial Québec French words. In the excerpt below, the word *loyer* is used to mean 'apartment' rather than 'rent,' as it does in referential French. Later in the same song, the verb *cogner* is used in the sense of 'to knock (at a door or a window)', a sense that is close to the meanings of the verb in referential French, but not identical. However, they also use *réveil* to mean 'alarm clock', instead of *cadran*, which would be the usual word in colloquial Québec French.

Irresponsable 'Irresponsible' (lyrics: Jonathan Painchaud; music: Jonathan Painchaud & Michel Duguay; interpreter: Okoumé)

8 heures le réveil qui sonne	8 o'clock the alarm goes off
Le proprio au téléphone	The landlord on the phone
Les menaces qui fusent de toutes parts	Threats are coming from all over
Il me parle de Huissier	He talks about the bailiff
Et moi, de droits et libertés	And me, about rights and freedoms
Tout ça pour deux mois de retard	All that because I'm 2 months late
S'il veut me traîner en cour	If he wants to take me to court
Je n'serai plus là demain	I won't be here tomorrow
C'est tant pis pour ce vautour	It's too bad for that vulture
Son loyer sentait l'chien, c'était l'mien	His apartment smelled like dog, it was mine
[. . .]	

More advanced students, who have a better knowledge of French in general and already some familiarity with Québec French, should now be introduced to songs whose language mirrors the colloquial spoken language of many Québécois. While many excellent songs would work very well here, I would like to offer two options: the first is a song from the 1970s which has marked very deeply the history of music in Québec, while the second is a recent song by a young singer

whose music and lyrics are likely to appeal to high-school and college students.

The cultural revolution which started in the 1950s and expanded greatly in the 1960s culminated in the 1970s with the creation of many musical bands who had a very large impact on the musical scene of Québec. *La complainte du phoque en Alaska* 'The complaint of a seal in Alaska', interpreted by a band from that period, is certainly one of the most famous songs in the Québec repertoire. This song, which is an allegory that tells the story of a man whose girlfriend left to work in the United States, is sung with a very typical Québec accent and uses many grammatical constructions and words typical of colloquial Québec French. For instance, as we can see below, the first verse contains the non-standard pronunciations [kre] for *crois*, *moé* for *moi*, and *quéqu'part* for *quelque part*. It also contains a few instances of the [a] vowel in the final syllable of *Alaska* and in *gagner*. Finally, it contains two very frequent words or expressions of Québec French. The noun *blonde* is used by teenagers to refer to their girlfriend, but also by many adults to refer to their female partner, whether they are married or not.[9] When used in conjunction with the preposition *en*, the adjective *maudit*, which we saw in Lynda Lemay's song, no longer carries a negative meaning but rather expresses quantity and can be glossed as 'really' or 'a lot.'

La complainte du phoque en Alaska
'The complaint of a seal in Alaska'
(lyrics and music: Michel Rivard; interpreter: Beau Dommage)

Cré-moé, cré-moé pas	'Believe me, don't believe me
Quéqu' part en Alaska	Somewhere in Alaska
Y a un phoque qui s'ennuie en maudit	There's a seal that's really bored
Sa blonde est partie	His girlfriend left
Gagner sa vie	To earn a living
Dans un cirque aux États-Unis	In a circus in the United States'
[. . .]	

Daniel Boucher received two *Félixes*, the equivalent of a Grammy in Québec, for the best new artist of 2000 and for the best song of 2001. His first CD, *Dix mille matins* '10,000 mornings', has sold almost 100,000 copies in a market of approximately 7 million French speakers. The song which I have selected is reproduced in its entirety below. It is a short song which, like the *Complainte*, illustrates many phonological features of Québec French, including the pronunciation of the final consonant in *tout* (spelled *toutte* in this text, for this reason)

and the diphthongization of long [ɛ] in words like *faire, affaire*, and *ordinaire*. It also introduces one word of colloquial French, *cucu*, whose use is attested in different francophone communities, and its Québec equivalent, *quétaine*. Its grammar illustrates one very important feature of colloquial French: subject doubling. In the first two verses, the subject *Le mal que tu veux combattre* is doubled by the pronoun *il* (once again, spelled *y* in this song to reflect the pronunciation without a final /l/). Finally, it shows the use of *donc*, pronounced [dɔ̃], as an element which increases the intensity of the verb (in these two cases, imperatives).

Le nombril du monde 'The world's center'
(lyrics and music: Daniel Boucher)

Le mal que tu veux combattre	'The evil that you want to fight
Y est en dedans de toé	It is inside you
T'as pas besoin d'aller te battre	You don't need to go and fight
Avec personne d'autre ailleurs	With anybody else elsewhere
De toute façon	Anyway
Tu pourras pas combattre le mal	You won't be able to fight the evil
En dedans de personne d'autre que toé	Inside anybody else but you
Toutte c'que tu peux faire	All you can do
C'est faire ton affaire	Is take care of your own business
Ça sonne cucu, ça sonne quétaine	It sounds goofy, it sounds goofy
Ça sonne ordinaire	It sounds ordinary
Fais-lé donc	Why don't you do it
Fais-nous donc nous rapprocher	Why don't you make us get closer
Du nombril du monde	To the world's center'

Finally, I would like to propose one last song which would probably be best suited for the most advanced levels of French. Loco Locass, a new rap group from Québec that is composed of members with varied ethnic backgrounds and are thus representative of the new multicultural nature of Québec society, has won many music awards in Québec, including the Félix-Leclerc award in 2001. Many critics have hailed the quality of their texts, and the inspiring effect of their lyrics for young people is recognized by the inclusion of one of their songs in a web site devoted to encouraging teenage authors to write in French: *Écrivains en devenir* (http://www.francite.net/education/index.html). For French instructors in the United States, I hesitated between the song included in this web site, *Langage-toi*,[10] and another titled *Sheila, ch'us là* 'Sheila, I'm here'. I opted for the latter in reason of its

contents. While both songs are equally interesting musically, as they show that good rap music can be written in languages others than English, the latter focuses on Québec nationalism and thus presents an opportunity for introducing students to the recent and current sociopolitical context in Québec. It even includes the famous *Vive le Québec libre!* 'Long live a free Québec' uttered by Charles de Gaulle in Montréal in 1967. In addition, it is very interesting linguistically, as it features a mixture of features of colloquial Québec French (the pronunciation, the verb *capoter* 'to lose one mind,' the anglicism *badluck*, and an example of interrogative *-tu* in *C'est-tu moi qui capote*) and words and constructions of referential French (e.g., *palabres, déshydrater, suffoquer, assoiffé*). The reason for which I suggest that it should be kept for advanced students is that, even though the written lyrics are relatively straightforward, their musical setting often makes them very difficult to follow, even for a native speaker.

Sheila, ch'us là
(lyrics: Batlam, Biz, Nacer Fouad Taïbi;
music: Chafiik; interpreter: Loco Locass)

Les interminables palabres autour de la feuille d'érable
'The never-ending discussions about the maple leaf'
Me rendent malade
'Make me sick'
Moi j'avais voté Bloc pour que ça débloque
'I had voted for the Bloc [québécois] so it would move again'
Mais c'était sans compter le choc
'But it was not taking into account the shock'
De la ligne dure, qui dure et qu'on endure depuis cette époque
'Of the hard line, which lasts and that we put up with since that time'
C'est-tu moi qui capote - hystérique- pour quelques badlucks historiques
'Is it me who's losing my mind - hysterical - for a few historical mishaps'
Mais dans ta terre anglaise sur fond de R.O.C.
'But in your English land on a Rest-of-Canada background'
Mes racines latines déshydratent et suffoquent
'My Latin roots dry up and suffocate'
Dès lors, faut-il encore clore le débat?
'Consequently, should we close the debate once more'
Et débarrasser les prairies du Canada
'And rid the Canadian prairies'

De toute urgence d'une résurgence:
'Of any sense of urgency for a resurgence'
L'odyssée du lys assoiffé d'indépendence
'The odyssey of the fleur-de-lis thirsting after independence'

Conclusion

The teaching of French as a second or a foreign language has come a long way since the time when only Referential French was deemed appropriate for students. In this respect, sociolinguistics has already had a strong impact on language curricula. Researchers, textbook authors, and language teachers are now more aware of the pluralistic nature of French and realize that their students cannot become proficient second-language speakers of French unless they have acquired some familiarity with the variability that characterizes French. Thus, at this point, the question is not whether our language curricula should make room for regional and social varieties of French, but rather how this ought to be done.

In this paper, I have focused on the inclusion of Québec French in language programs. I have compared two different settings, the teaching of French as a second language in French immersion programs in the Montréal area, and the teaching of French as a foreign language in the United States. Given the obvious differences between the two situations, different goals must be set for each case and different approaches must be adopted. In the context of French immersion in Montréal, it is reasonable to expect that students should be able to achieve full functional competence in French. Furthermore, there may be real advantages for the students who master a range of registers of Québec French: while a mastery of standard Québec French will certainly best serve them in their academic and professional lives, an ability to speak colloquial Québec French would probably help them make francophone friends. Indeed, many students learning French in the Canadian context complain that the French that they are taught differs substantially from real-life French (Tarone & Swain 1995). For the immersion context, Auger (2002) proposes that teachers introduce novels and plays written by authors from Québec to familiarize students with the linguistic structures of Québec French and that they use role-play activities as an opportunity for using the colloquial features that will allow them to function normally in real-life French-speaking settings. Because full functional competence is not a realistic goal for American learners of French in a college setting and because American students would likely not benefit and might even be disadvantaged if they spoke French with a Québécois accent, the present

article proposes that exposure to Québec French should aim at developing a non-judgmental attitude to different accents and forms of speech and a good ability to understand French speakers from Québec. While one could certainly use literary works from Québec, including many of Michel Tremblay's novels and plays, to teach students about features of Québec French, I have proposed that an interesting alternative consists of using popular songs. Because many students have a strong interest in popular music, it is hoped that this approach will strike a chord with them and motivate them to make the effort to understand and maybe even memorize the lyrics of songs that they like. And because songs are short, we can present many of them in the course of one semester, thus exposing students to different samples of Québec French which illustrate the rich variety that characterizes the French language as it is spoken in Québec.

While this paper has focused exclusively on Québec French, it must be noted that a similar proposal could be made for introducing other regional varieties of French to American students. For instance, the Cajun community of Louisiana counts among its members many excellent singers and musicians, and teachers could easily play songs by Zachary Richard and Beausoleil, among many others, to their students. Similarly, students could be introduced to Acadian French, the other major variety of French in Canada. The song *Évangéline* could serve, for instance, to introduce the famous Acadian legend. And music by young contemporary singers such as Marie-Jo Thério, whose songs are usually written in standard French, and popular bands such as 1755, whose songs include many Acadian words, morphemes, and pronunciations could familiarize students of French with some of the different forms that French takes in the eastern provinces of Canada.

Notes

1. According to Joseph (1988), the distance between spoken and written French is increasing. While this is a widespread feeling among linguists and non-linguists alike, we have, at this point, no empirical evidence that this is indeed the case. Relatively little evidence is available concerning spoken French in past centuries, but what is available shows that many current non-standard constructions have existed in spoken French for many centuries.
2. I thank Jacques Leclerc for this information. A detailed report on the teaching of French as a second language is available on the Canadian Parents for French's site: http://www.cpf.ca/.
3. Allophones are native speakers of "other" languages, that is, neither English nor French.
4. Examples of such differences will be provided later in this section and in the next section.

5. While not encouraging students to sound like the Québécois, I do not think we should penalize them if they have spent time in Québec or have friends or relatives there and have acquired a Québécois accent. If some of their features are highly stigmatized, we should probably point that out to them and give them the opportunity to make their accent more neutral if they want to.

6. I thank Ben Kloda for drawing my attention to these materials and for giving me a chance to consult them.

7. This title must not be taken to imply or reflect any anti-hexagonal bias. Lemay has performed this song many times in France and is a highly regarded artist there. As we will see very shortly, this is a humorous song that pokes fun at both the French and the Québécois. The CD that features this song has sold enough copies in Frence to become *disque de platine*.

8. This song would accompany quite well the section entitled *Une langue bien de chez nous* on Québec French on pages 151–156 of *Chez nous*. Alternatively, because of the somewhat extensive part on meals, it would make a nice complement to the *À table!* section on pages 260–261, which presents breakfast menus in different francophone communities.

9. Québec officially recognizes common law marriage, and many couples never get married (according to a recent survey, almost 25% of all adult couples are not officially married in Québec). Evidently, this choice is not frowned upon in Québec society, as many married people refer to their spouses as their *blonde* 'girlfriend' or *chum* 'boyfriend'.

10. This title is a pun between *langage* 'language' and *engager* 'to commit', so it means something like 'Commit yourself toward language'.

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